



**Pierce family papers
1833-1954
(bulk dates 1862-1864)**

Abstract: The Pierce family papers comprise materials relating to the Pierce family of New Castle, Delaware, from the early nineteenth century to the middle twentieth century. Most of the forty-eight items date from the American Civil War and provide a personal description of military life.

Descriptive Summary

Identification:	MSS 293
Creator:	Pierce family.
Title:	Pierce family papers
Inclusive Dates:	1833-1954
Bulk Dates:	1862-1864
Extent:	.3 linear ft. (48 items)
Language:	Materials entirely in English.

Administrative Information

Citation:	MSS 293, Pierce family papers, Special Collections, University of Delaware Library, Newark, Delaware.
Shelving Summary:	Box 1: Shelved in SPEC MSS manuscript boxes (1 inch)
Location:	Special Collections, University of Delaware Library Newark, Delaware 19717-5267 Phone: 302-831-2229 Fax: 302-831-6003 URL: http://www.lib.udel.edu/ud/spec/
Source:	Acquired, 1956.
Processing:	Originally processed, 1956; revised by Anita A. Wellner, November 1993. Encoded by Monifa Carter, Natalie Baur, February 2010; revised by Jaime Margalotti, November 2012.
Materials Available in Alternative Format:	Access to digitized versions of the Pierce family papers is available at the University of Delaware Institutional Repository .
Access Restrictions:	The collection is open for research.
Terms Governing Use and Reproduction:	Use of materials from this collection beyond the exceptions provided for in the Fair Use and Educational Use clauses of the U.S. Copyright Law may violate federal law. Permission to publish or reproduce is required from the copyright holder. Please contact Special Collections, University of Delaware Library, http://www.lib.udel.edu/cgi-bin/askspec.cgi

Biographical Note

The Pierce family papers includes letters written by George Kirke Pierce and Enos William Pierce to their parents, Elias and Sarah A. Pierce; their sister, Marey Jane Pierce; and their brother, Ezra Pierce. Both sons served in the Pennsylvania Volunteers during the Civil War.

Elias Pierce (1807-1871) and Sarah Ann Moseley (1809-1905) were married on January 17, 1833, and had seven children: Catharine Ann (1834-1902), Turzah Elizabeth (b. 1836), George Kirke (1838-1864), Enos William (1840-1864), Marey Jane (b. 1843), Ezra (b. 1845), and Sarah Maria (1848-1872).

The Pierce home was in Brandywine Hundred, New Castle County, Delaware, where the family engaged in farming. Both Enos and George worked on the farm prior to their military service during the Civil War.

George K. Pierce was born September 12, 1838. He served as a private in Company D of the 97th Regiment of the Pennsylvania Volunteers until his death following a battle in an area between Petersburg and Richmond, Virginia, on July 26, 1864. His commanding officer was Captain William S. Mendenhall. Captain Mendenhall arranged for Elias Pierce to retrieve the body of his son following George's death.

Enos W. Pierce was born December 4, 1840. Enos Pierce served in Company F of the 97th Regiment of the Pennsylvania Volunteers. He was reported missing and presumed dead following a battle on May 20, 1864, near Bermuda Hundred, Virginia.

Several letters in the collection are from George and Enos Pierce to their only brother, Ezra Pierce. Ezra was born December 10, 1845, and in 1885 he married Mary Jane Goodman. An obituary of their son, Lewis Ezra Pierce, appears in F10. According to Patrick Morris in his thesis, *The Pierce Letters*, Ezra Pierce did not volunteer for army service at the beginning of the Civil War but was later conscripted. After having lost two sons to the war, his family did not wish for him to serve. They paid the government a bounty of \$500 in lieu of Ezra's military service.

Sources:

Morris, Patrick Winston. *The Pierce Letters: a history of the 97th Pennsylvania Volunteers*. Newark, Delaware: 1954

Biographical information was also derived from correspondence and documents in the collection.

Scope and Content Note

The letters and documents in this collection were written between 1833 and 1954, but primarily focus on three years of the Civil War, 1862-1864. Most of the forty-eight items, which include letters, photographs, drawings, and words for a song, provide an excellent portrait of military life for two brothers, George and Enos Pierce. A few of the items, such as a marriage certificate for Elias and Sarah Pierce, the obituaries, and a page of biographical information, provide details about other members of the Pierce family.

The core of the collection is the group of letters written by George and Enos Pierce to their parents and siblings. Beginning in February 1862, following their arrival at Fernandina, Florida, as part of the 97th Regiment of the Pennsylvania Volunteers, the two brothers corresponded until their deaths in 1864.

Over those three years the letters described the movements of their companies, detailed their daily lives as Union troops, recounted battles in which they engaged, depicted their surroundings, and recorded their feelings about the war and home. Enclosed in the letters are Enos's drawings of the defenses for Fort Wagner and a Presbyterian Church near Port Royal, South Carolina, as well as the words to a song titled "Song of George Riley," assumed to be written by George Pierce.

While stationed in areas of Florida, South Carolina, and Virginia, the brothers described battles at Fort Wagner (South Carolina), James Island (South Carolina), Charleston (South Carolina), and Bermuda Hundred (Virginia). They also reported daring night raids by small bands of Confederate troops on the Union picket lines in Fernandina, Florida, and Port Royal, South Carolina.

The descriptions of military life contain complaints about the weather, insects, sleeping conditions, and food; but are also filled with good humor and indications of the comradery among the soldiers. For example, a Christmas 1862 letter, written from St. Helena Island, South Carolina, describe the festivities and games by which the men celebrated the holiday.

Both Enos and George Pierce were killed during battles in Virginia in 1864. In his final letters George Pierce described his efforts to locate his brother following a battle at Bermuda Hundred, Virginia, on May 23. He reported the horrible losses sustained by his regiment in that battle and his lack of success in discovering the fate of his brother.

George Pierce was wounded in a battle near Petersburg, Virginia, on July 26 and died within days. The letters, instructions, and military pass found in F8 document his death and his father's efforts to retrieve the body.

Other items in the collection include one letter from a cousin, William H. Pierce, who was a member of the First Delaware Battery stationed at Portsmouth, Virginia; a marriage certificate for Elias and Sarah Pierce; two photographs of George and Enos Pierce; and biographical information about the Pierce family.

These letters were the basis of a University of Delaware senior thesis titled "The Pierce Letters: a history of the 97th Pennsylvania Volunteers," which was written in 1954 by Patrick Winston Morris. This thesis used the Pierce letters and various military records to trace the movements and activities of the 97th Pennsylvania Volunteers, as well as detail the history of the regiment. Because the information gathered from the military records adds significantly to information found in the letters, this thesis is an excellent resource for details concerning the regiment and the Pierce brothers.

Selected Search Terms

Personal Names

Pierce, George--Correspondence.

Pierce, Enos--Correspondence.

Pierce, Elias--Correspondence.

Pierce, Marey--Correspondence.

Pierce, Ezra--Correspondence.

Pierce, William--Correspondence.

Pierce family--Correspondence.

Corporate Names

United States. Army. Pennsylvania Infantry Regiment, 97th (1861-1865)

Topical Terms

Soldiers--Correspondence.

Geographic Names

United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865.

South Carolina--History--Civil War, 1861-1865.

Virginia--History--Civil War, 1861-1865.

Florida--History--Civil War, 1861-1865.

Form/Genre Terms

Letters (correspondence)

Photographs.

Clippings (information artifacts)

Marriage certificates.

Freehand drawings (drawings)

Occupation

Soldiers.

Personal Contributors

Pierce, George, correspondent.

Pierce, Enos, correspondent.

Pierce, Elias, correspondent.

Pierce, Marey, correspondent.

Pierce, Ezra, correspondent.

Pierce, William, correspondent.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged in chronological order employing five series.

I. Marriage certificate and clipping, 1833-1860

II. Photographs of George K. and Enos W. Pierce, 1861-1862

III. Letters written by George and Enos Pierce, 1862-1864

IV. Letters and documents related to the death of George Pierce, 1864-1865

V. Other Pierce family documents, 1888-1954

Detailed Description of the Collection

Series I. Marriage certificate and clipping , 1833, 1860

Marriage certificate for Elias Pierce and Sarah Ann Moseley , 1833, 1860 [Box 1 F1]

Signed by James B. Ayars. Printed by James Kelley, Doylestown, PA. Clipping affixed to back includes marriage announcement of Edward Richards and Miss Catharine A. Pierce on December 13, 1860.

[PDF](#)

Series II. Photographs of George K. and Enos W. Pierce , circa 1861-1862

Photographs are of George and Enos Pierce although it is uncertain which brother is in which picture.

George Pierce (?) photograph , circa 1861-1862 [Box 1 F2]

[PDF](#)

Enos Pierce (?) photograph , circa 1861-1862 [Box 1 F2]

[PDF](#)

Series III. Letters written by George and Enos Pierce , 1862-1864

Letter from Enos W. Pierce to sister , 1862 February 5 [Box 1 F3]

Autograph letter signed. From Fernandina, Florida, via East Royal, South Carolina.

[PDF](#)

Letter from George K. Pierce to family , 1862 March 21 [Box 1 F3]

Autograph letter signed. From Fernandina, Florida.

[PDF](#)

Letter from Enos W. Pierce to family , 1862 March 26 [Box 1 F3]

Autograph letter signed. From Jacksonville, Florida, via Port Royal South Carolina.

[PDF](#)

Letter from George K. Pierce to family , 1862 April 3 [Box 1 F3]

Autograph letter signed. From Jacksonville, Florida, via Port Royal, South Carolina.

[PDF](#)

Letter from Enos W. Pierce to sister , 1862 April 4 [Box 1 F3]

Autograph letter signed. From Jacksonville, Florida, via Port Royal, South Carolina. With envelope.

[PDF](#)

Letter from Enos W. Pierce to parents , 1862 April 15 [**Box 1 F3**]

Autograph letter signed. From Port Royal, South Carolina. With envelope.

[PDF](#)

Letter from Enos W. Pierce to father , 1862 April 18 [**Box 1 F3**]

Autograph letter signed. From Port Royal, South Carolina. Includes signed pencil sketch of Presbyterian Church with short description: "Prispretearian [sic.] Church on port Royal lent. Drawing while on picket." With envelope.

[PDF](#)

Letter from George K. Pierce to sister , 1862 June 21 [**Box 1 F4**]

Autograph letter signed. From James Island.

[PDF](#)

Letter from William H. Pierce to cousin George K. Pierce , 1862 July 9 [**Box 1 F4**]

Autograph letter signed. From Portsmouth, Virginia, via Port Royal, South Carolina.

[PDF](#)

Letter from Enos W. Pierce to father , 1862 December 23 [**Box 1 F4**]

Autograph letter signed. From South Carolina via Port Royal, South Carolina.

[PDF](#)

Letter from George K. Pierce , 1862 December 23 [**Box 1 F4**]

Autograph letter signed. From St. Helena Island.

[PDF](#)

Letter from Enos W. Pierce , 1862 December 27 [**Box 1 F4**]

Autograph letter signed. From Port Royal, South Carolina. With envelope.

[PDF](#)

Coconut bark , circa 1862 [**Box 1 F4**]

Coconut bark originally sealed in one of the Pierce letters.

[PDF](#)

"Song of George Riley" , circa 1862 [**Box 1 F4**]

Autographed document by George K. Pierce. Patrick Morris states that George Pierce wrote this song about the Civil War while on picket duty.

[PDF](#)

Letter from George K. Pierce to father , 1863 March 13 [**Box 1 F5**]

Autograph letter signed. From Port Royal, South Carolina.

[PDF](#)

Letter from George K. Pierce to father , 1863 May 17 [**Box 1 F5**]

Autograph letter signed. With envelope.

[PDF](#)

Letter from Enos W. Pierce to sister , 1863 June 23 [**Box 1 F5**]

Autograph letter signed. From James Island.

[PDF](#)

Letter from Enos W. Pierce to brother , 1863 June 29 [**Box 1 F5**]

Autograph letter signed. From Seabrook Island, South Carolina.

[PDF](#)

Letter from George K. Pierce to father , 1863 July 21 [**Box 1 F6**]

Autograph letter signed. From Morris Island, South Carolina.

[PDF](#)

Letter from Enos W. Pierce to father , 1863 July 21 [**Box 1 F6**]

Autograph letter signed. From Morris Island, South Carolina.

[PDF](#)

Letter from George K. Pierce to sister , 1863 September 22 [**Box 1 F6**]

Autograph letter signed. From Morris Island, South Carolina. With envelope.

[PDF](#)

Letter from Enos W. Pierce to Sister, Sarah M. Pierce. , 1863 October 8 [**Box 1 F6**]

Autograph letter signed. From Morris Island, South Carolina.

[PDF](#)

Letter from Enos W. Pierce to sister , 1863 October 10 [**Box 1 F6**]

Autograph letter signed. From Fernandina, Florida.

[PDF](#)

Letter from George K Pierce to father , 1863 October 30 [**Box 1 F6**]

Autograph letter signed. From Fernandina, Florida. With envelope.

[PDF](#)

Letter from Enos W. Pierce to brother , 1863 December 18 [**Box 1 F6**]

Autograph letter signed. From Fernandina, Florida via Port Royal, South Carolina.

[PDF](#)

Description of Fort Wagner by Enos W. Pierce , circa 1863 [**Box 1 F6**]

Used page from printed 1863 diary. Describes Fort Wagner and the battles there.

[PDF](#)

Plan of Fort Wagner and Island by Enos W. Pierce , circa 1863 [**Box 1 F6**]

Sketch on "Our Whole Union" stationary. Autograph letter signed on the back.

[PDF](#)

Letter from Enos W. Pierce to brother , 1864 January 30 [**Box 1 F7**]

Autograph letter signed. From Fernandina, Florida.

[PDF](#)

Letter from Enos W. Pierce to father , 1864 March 6 [**Box 1 F7**]

Autograph letter signed. From Fernandina, Florida, via Port Royal, South Carolina. With envelope.

[PDF](#)

Letter from George K. Pierce to parents , 1864 May 25 [**Box 1 F7**]

Autograph letter signed. From Bermuda Hundred, Virginia. Reports Enos as missing and possibly dead.

[PDF](#)

Letter from George K. Pierce to father , 1864 June 3 [**Box 1 F7**]

Autograph letter signed. From White House Landing, Virginia. With envelope. George describes search for missing Enos. Piece of flag originally enclosed.

[PDF](#)

Letter from George K. Pierce to brother , 1864 July 12 [**Box 1 F7**]

Autograph letter signed. From near Petersburg, Virginia, via Fortress Monroe. Discusses missing Enos.

[PDF](#)

Letter from George K. Pierce to sister , 1864 July 14 [**Box 1 F7**]

Autograph letter signed. From near Petersburg, Virginia, via Fortress Monroe. With envelope. Discusses missing Enos.

[PDF](#)

Unmatched envelopes , 1862-1864, undated [**Box 1 F7**]

Envelopes that have become disassociated from the letters in which they were mailed.

[PDF](#)

Series IV. Letters and documents related to the death of George Pierce , 1864-1865

Letter from James Hamilton to Elias Pierce , 1864 July 27 [**Box 1 F8**]

Autograph letter signed. From Petersburg, Virginia. With envelope. Describes George Pierce's wounding.

[PDF](#)

Letter from Mary Weer to Mr. Elias Pierce , 1864 August 2 [**Box 1 F8**]

Autograph letter signed. With envelope marked "In haste." Passes on news of George Pierce's wounding.

[PDF](#)

Pass for Elias Pierce written by Captain W.S. Mendenhall , 1864 August 5 [**Box 1 F8**]

Autograph document signed. To be presented at Chesapeake Hospital, in order to find wounded George K. Pierce.

[PDF](#)

Signed guest pass to Hampton for Elias Pierce , 1864 August 5 [**Box 1 F8**]

From Provost Marshal's Office, Head Quarters Department Virginia and North Carolina, Fort Monroe, Virginia. By command of Major General Butler. Seal of John Cassels, Capt. and Provost.

[PDF](#)

Letter of instructions for Elias Pierce to proceed to Petersburg, Virginia , 1864 [**Box 1 F8**]

Series IV.

Autograph letter signed from N.S. Mendenhall. Provides instructions on how Elias Pierce can retrieve the body of George K. Pierce from a grave at the Field Hospital 18th Army Corps.

[PDF](#)

Notice of application on the case of George K. Pierce , 1865 January 9 [**Box 1 F8**]

Signed notice. From Treasury Department, Second Auditor's Office, EB Linch, auditor. With envelope.

[PDF](#)

Series V. Other Pierce family documents , 1884-1954

Unmatched envelope addressed to Mrs. Sarah A. Pierce , 1884 July 26 [**Box 1 F9**]

Stamped envelope with Rowland postmark c/o Ezra Pierce.

[PDF](#)

Letter from Ezra Pierce to mother , 1888 April 15 [**Box 1 F9**]

Autograph letter signed. From Landenburg. With envelope.

[PDF](#)

Obituary for Lewis E. Pierce , 1954 January 24 [**Box 1 F10**]

Newspaper obituary. From the *Wilmington Sunday Star*.

[PDF](#)

Obituary for Lewis E. Pierce , 1954 January 25 [**Box 1 F10**]

Newspaper obituary. Another short obituary pasted to bottom of clipping.

[PDF](#)

Bible records of Elias Pierce family , undated [**Box 1 F10**]

Typed copy. Lists births, deaths, and marriages of the Pierce family, 1838-1904.

[PDF](#)
